

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LETTER TO "FOREIGN POLICY"

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF LETTER TO EDITOR FROM LOWELL CITRON
WHICH APPEARS IN WINTER ISSUE OF "FOREIGN POLICY."

BEGIN QUOTE: TO THE EDITORS:

IN YOUR SUMMER 1975 ISSUE, LAURENCE STERN UNDERTOOK TO TELL
US "HOW WE FAILED IN CYPRUS." UNFORTUNATELY, THE VALUE OF
HIS REPORT IS DIMINISHED BY SOME BASIC DEFECTS WHICH THE
FOLLOWING COMMENTS ATTEMPT TO SUMMARIZE. (ALTHOUGH I AM
WRITING NOW AS A PRIVATE CITIZEN, UNAFFILIATED WITH THE U.S.
GOVERNMENT, I SHOULD NOTE THAT I SERVED FROM 1972 TO 1974 IN
THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN NICOSIA.)

1. THE APPROXIMATE THIRD OF THE ARTICLE DEALING WITH CYPRUS
ITSELF IS RIDDLED WITH A NUMBER OF INACCURACIES. I
COULD CITE AT LEAST 30 SUCH MISTAKES--SIMPLE FACTUAL ERRORS
AND/OR MISLEADING STATEMENTS--BUT THERE JUST ISN'T ENOUGH
SPACE HERE TO CORRECT AND CLARIFY ALL THESE EYEBROW-RAISERS.

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2. PERHAPS INADVERTENTLY, THERE IS A TENDENCY TO TRANSFORM CYPRUS INTO A CONCEPTUAL MOLD WHICH DOES NOT MATCH THE COMPLEX REALITIES OF THE ISLAND. HERE ARE TWO EXAMPLES:

A. STERN REPEATEDLY MISCHARACTERIZES THE 1955-1959 GREEK CYPRIOT INSURRECTION AGAINST THE BRITISH AS A STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE. BY FAILING TO MAKE THE CRUCIAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE AIMS OF THE GREEK CYPRIOTS (UNCONDITIONAL UNION WITH GREECE) AND THE FRUSTRATING OUTCOME OF THEIR EFFORTS (THE IMPOSITION OF AN INDEPENDENT, BICOMMUNAL "PARTNERSHIP"), STERN PRODUCES A DISTORTED CONTEXT FOR UNDERSTANDING THE VENDETTAS THAT HAVE POISONED CYPRIOT POLITICS ALL THESE YEARS.

B. ARCHBISHOP MAKARIOS EMERGES AS A THIRD WORLDLY VICTIM OF RIGHT WING FANATICS AND (SUSPECTED) AMERICAN MACHINATIONS, A SACERDOTAL SIHANOUK STRUGGLING TO MAINTAIN NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AGAINST GREAT POWER INTRIGUE. ACTUALLY, HIS BEATITUDE SHARES WITH ATHENS RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRECIPITATING THE CYPRUS CATASTROPHE. BOTH THE ARCHBISHOP AND HIS ENEMIES FOSTERED A TOLERANCE FOR THUGGERY AND ILLEGALITY IN CYPRUS; BOTH PURSUED DELIBERATE POLICIES OF MANIPULATING INTRAMURAL FEUDS AND PERPETUATING INTERCOMMUNAL RESENTMENTS FOR MORE THAN A DECADE.

3. GIVEN THE HISTORY OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN POSTWAR ATHENIAN POLITICS, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT STERN SHOULD DELVE INTO THE MURK OF GREEK CONSPIRACY THEORIES. BUT I FEAR THAT HE HAS FALLEN PREY TO THAT CYPRIOT TALENT FOR EMBROIDERY WHICH IS NOT LIMITED TO MAKING LEFKARA LACE. THE AMERICAN ERROR BEFORE AND AFTER THE COUP WAS COMPLACENCY NOT CONSPIRACY. THERE REALLY WAS NO U.S. INVOLVEMENT OF ANY SORT WITH ANTI-MAKARIOS ACTIVITY ON CYPRUS, NOR U.S. COLLUSION WITH THE MEN WHO DIRECTED THE COUP FROM ATHENS.

4. STERN GENERALLY ESTIMATES THE CENTRALITY OF AMERICAN ACTIONS AND INACTIONS AS DECISIVE FACTORS IN THE IMBROGLIO. CLEARLY, OUR DIPLOMATIC TACTICS THROUGHOUT THE CRISIS WERE INEFFECTUALLY IN AVERTING AND/OR AMELIORATING THE DISASTER. BUT THAT DISASTER WAS CREATED AND UNCLASSIFIED

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WORSENEED BY THE HUBRIS, TREACHERY, AND SHEER STUPIDITY OF THE PROTAGONISTS. THEY WERE NOT THE PASSIVE VICTIMS OF THE LEAST INNOCENT-LOOKING BYSTANDERS. THERE WAS, THROUGHOUT IT ALL, CONGERIES OF LOCAL CONFLICTS, THE DYNAMICS OF WHICH DID AT LEAST AS MUCH TO DESTROY THE ISLAND'S FRAGILE "STABILITY" AS DID THE SUBSEQUENT FUTILITY OF AMERICAN "CRISIS MANAGEMENT."

5. THERE ARE INDEED VALID REASONS TO CASTIGATE THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HIS HANDLING OF THE CRISIS AND ITS AFTERMATH. YET THE MORE ONE KNOWS ABOUT THE INTRICACIES OF THE CYPRUS MORASS, THE LESS CONFIDENT ONE BECOMES THAT THE TRAGIC CHAIN OF EVENTS WOULD HAVE BEEN BROKEN BY

THE "EFFECTIVE" APPLICATION OF U.S. DIPLOMATIC PRESSURES. A GOOD CASE CAN BE MADE THAT THE CYPRUS MALADY WAS AN INCURABLE DISEASE FOR WHICH NO DIPLOMATIC PLACEBO WOULD HAVE BEEN A SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT. IT IS AN ENTIRELY SEPARATE THING TO SAY THAT SOME OF THE SUGGESTED REMEDIES, ALTHOUGH REGARDED AS UNLIKELY TO BE EFFECTIVE, SHOULD HAVE BEEN TRIED ANYWAY, IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A CREDITABLE RECORD OF "BENIGN" U.S. POLICY.

6. I REALIZE THAT ANALYSTS OF INTERNATIONAL BLUNDERING NEED NOT EXCUSE THE CONDITIONING EFFECT OF HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS ON THE DECISIONS AND ATTITUDES OF BOTH THE BELLIGERENTS AND THE PUTATIVE MEDIATORS. BUT IT IS NECESSARY TO EMPHASIZE THAT AT EACH OF THE TURNING POINTS OF THE 1974 CRISIS, THE PARTICIPANTS SHOWED HOW WELL THEY HAD LEARNED THE WRONG LESSONS OF PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE--THE 1963-1964 AND 1967 ERUPTIONS. THE GREEKS BLINDLY EXPECTED HISTORY TO REPEAT ITSELF TO THEIR BENEFIT; THE TURKS WERE IMPLACABLY DETERMINED NOT TO ALLOW THAT; THE BRITISH, AMERICANS, AND SOVIETS CAUTIOUSLY AVOIDED ACTIVE INTERVENTIO

7. HINDSIGHT NATURALLY IS MIRACULOUSLY PRESCIENT. BUT A VITAL FACTOR ABOUT THE PRE-COUP PERIOD TENDS TO BE OVERLOOKED BY ANALYSTS WHOSE ATTENTION TO CYPRUS BEGAN AFTERWARD. IT IS THAT UNTIL THE TANKS BEGAN TO MOVE IN NICOSIA, MOST BETS--LOCAL AND FOREIGN--HAD BEEN PLACED ON THE IMMINENT SUCCESS OF THE ARCHBISHOP'S LATEST EXCURSION TO THE UNCLASSIFIED

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BRINK. INFORMED PEOPLE WERE MESMERIZED BY MAKARIOS' RECORD OF "SUCCESSFUL" GAMESMANSHIP INTO ACCEPTING THE ARCHBISHOP'S OWN CONCLUSION THAT HE HAD DEALT HIMSELF A WINNING HAND IN HIS DEADLY GAME WITH ATHENS. U.S. DIPLOMATIC AND INTELLIGENCE REPORTING SEEMED TO CONFIRM MAKARIOS' CALCULATIONS. INFORMATION POINTING AWAY FROM A COUP, INDICATING THE APPARENT RATIONALITY OF THE GREEK LEADERS, WAS REGARDED AS "CREDIBLE," MEANING IT MATCHED THE RECIPIENT'S OWN CONCLUSIONS. BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES OF A COUP WERE SO OPVIO;;S TO EVERYONE, IT WAS EASY TO BELIEVE THAT BRIGADIER IOANNIDES WOULD ACT RATIONALLY. AND THE SHEPHERDS HAD HEARD THE BOY CRY WOLF TOO MANY TIMES.

8. U.S. POLICY AFTER THE COUP WAS LARGELY PUSILLANIMOUS AND UNFORTUNATELY CONDITIONED BY YEARS OF ACQUIESCENCE TO THE

ATHENS DICTATORSHIP. IN CYPRUS, OUR EFFORTS APPEARED PRIMARILY DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE THE REPLACEMENT OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S MORE OBJECTIONABLE APPENDAGES BY "SENSIBLE" MEN. BUT WITH THE NATIONAL GUARD IN FULL DEPLOYMENT, THE TURKS DID NOT BELIEVE THEY HAD TIME TO WAIT FOR THE EASING ASIDE OF NICOS SAMPSON, THE "BUTCHER OF OMORPHITA." WHAT-EVER THE THEORETICAL SCENARIOS PROPOSED TO REVERSE THE

WORST EFFECTS OF THE COUP, I DO NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS ANY PROSPECT OF STOPPING THE TURKISH INTERVENTION OF JULY 20. THE IMMEDIATE RESTORATION OF ARCHBISHOP MAKARIOS, AND THE PRESERVATION OF A STATUS QUO THOROUGHLY DETRIMENTAL TO TURKISH CYPRIOTS, WAS NOT THE TURKISH ARMY'S IDEA OF A CAUSE FOR WHICH NO SACRIFICE WOULD HAVE BEEN IN VAIN.

9. THE BRUTAL DENOUEMENT OF THE CRISIS--THE TURKISH OFFENSIVE OF AUGUST 14--FLOWED FROM THE DYNAMICS OF THE HISTORIC PROBLEM AND THE MUTUAL INTRANSIGENCIES INTO WHICH BOTH SIDES LOCKED THEMSELVES. PARALYSIS IN WASHINGTON AND OVERCONFIDENCE IN LONDON ENABLED GREEK DELUSIONS AND TURKISH PARANOIA TO BRING A BAD SITUATION TO ITS "LOGICAL CONCLUSION." ONCE THE TURKS HAD THEIR FORCES WHERE THEY WANTED THEM, AS A DIRECT RESULT OF GREEK RECKLESSNESS, NOTHING SHORT OF A MAJOR THIRD-PARTY MILITARY INTERVENTION COULD HAVE STOPPED THE INEVITABLE TEMPTATION TO "SMASH-AND-GRAB" WHILE DIPLOMATS WERE STILL READJUSTING THEIR UNCLASSIFIED

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FORMULAS. IN THE SUMMER OF 1974, THERE WERE NO VOLUNTEERS FOR THE ROLE OF WORLD POLICEMAN.

10. IT IS ONLY PARTIALLY RIGHT TO SEE CYPRUS AS A "MONUMENT TO FAILED DIPLOMACY." THOSE OF US WHO WERE THERE WOULD INSCRIBE A DEDICATION TO THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF NATIONALIST OBSESSIONS AND THE RESISTANCE OF THE HUMAN MIND TO REASON. END QUOTE. KISSINGER

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